

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) An apparatus for treating a recording element having an inherent durability characteristic that is capable of being increased and including a carrier that can be removed from the recording element, said apparatus comprising:

a carrier removal station adapted to remove a predetermined percentage of the carrier from the recording element; and

a converting station positioned downstream from the carrier removal station adapted to increase the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element,

wherein the carrier removal station is further adapted to remove the predetermined percentage of the carrier that is removed from the recording element by the carrier removal station is a minimum amount necessary to prevent blistering of the recording element at the converting station when the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element is increased at the converting station.

2. (cancelled)

3. (cancelled)

4. (cancelled)

5. (cancelled)

6. (cancelled)

7. (cancelled)

8. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the carrier removal station is positioned adjacent to the converting station.

9. (previously presented) The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein a preheating station is positioned between the carrier removal station and the converting station.

10. (previously presented) An apparatus for treating a recording element having a durability characteristic, comprising:

a carrier removal station adapted to remove a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element;

a converting station positioned downstream from the carrier removal station adapted to increase a durability characteristic of the recording element; and

a preheating station positioned between the carrier removal station and the converting station,

wherein the predetermined percentage of the carrier that is removed from the recording element by the carrier removal station is a minimum amount necessary to prevent blistering of the recording element at the converting station when the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element is increased at the converting station.

11. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 1, further comprising a controller electrically connected to at least one of the carrier removal station and the converting station, wherein an operating parameter of at least one of the carrier removal station and the converting station is adjustable.

12. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 11, wherein the operating parameter is adjustable by a user.

13. (previously presented) The apparatus according to Claim 11, wherein the operating parameter is adjustable by the controller based on criteria stored in the controller.

14. (previously presented) An apparatus for treating a recording element comprising:

a carrier removal station adapted to remove a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element; and

a converting station positioned downstream from the carrier removal station adapted to increase a durability characteristic of the recording element;

wherein an operating parameter of the carrier removal station is adjustable to adjust the percentage of the carrier to be removed from the recording element.

15. (previously presented) The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the converting station comprises a pair of rollers positioned to apply pressure to the recording element which is sufficient to increase the inherent characteristic of the recording element.

16. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 15, wherein the converting station comprises a heat source.

17. (previously presented) An apparatus for treating a recording element comprising:

a carrier removal station adapted to remove a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element;

a converting station positioned downstream from the carrier removal station adapted to increase a durability characteristic of the recording element; and

a controller adjusts the percentage of the carrier removed from the recording element based on a characteristic of the recording element.

18. (cancelled)

19. (cancelled)

20. (currently amended) A method of treating a recording element having an inherent durability characteristic that is capable of being increased and including a carrier that can be removed from the recording element, said method comprising:

removing a predetermined percentage of the carrier from the recording element in a ~~first station~~ carrier removal station; and thereafter increasing the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element in a ~~second station~~ converting station distinct from the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station,

wherein the predetermined percentage of the carrier that is removed from the recording element by the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station is a minimum amount necessary to prevent blistering of the recording element at the ~~second station~~ converting station when the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element is increased at the ~~second station~~ converting station.

21. (original) The method according to Claim 20. wherein increasing the durability characteristic includes applying pressure to the recording element.

22. (original) The method according to Claim 20. wherein increasing the durability characteristic includes applying heat to the recording element.

23. (original) The method according to Claim 20, wherein removing the predetermined percentage of carrier includes applying heat to the recording element.

24. (currently amended) A method of treating a recording element comprising:

removing a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element in a ~~first station~~ carrier removal station;

increasing a durability characteristic of the recording element in a ~~second station~~ converting station, wherein the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station is distinct from the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station; and

preheating the recording element between removing the predetermined percentage of the carrier at the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station and increasing the durability characteristic of the recording element at the ~~second station~~ converting station,

wherein the predetermined percentage of the carrier that is removed from the recording element by the ~~first station~~ carrier removal station is a minimum amount necessary to prevent blistering of the recording element at the ~~second station~~ converting station when the inherent durability characteristic of the recording element is increased at the ~~second station~~ converting station.

25. (previously presented) A method of treating a recording element comprising:

removing a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element in a first station;

increasing a durability characteristic of the recording element in a second station, wherein the second station is distinct from the first station; and

preheating the recording element between removing the predetermined percentage of the carrier and increasing the durability characteristic of the recording element; and

controlling the percentage of carrier removed from the recording element.

26. (previously presented) A method of treating a recording element comprising:

removing a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element in a first station; and

increasing a durability characteristic of the recording element in a second station, wherein the second station is distinct from the first station;

wherein an operating parameter of the first station is adjustable to adjust the percentage of carrier to be removed from the recording element.

27. (original) The method according to Claim 26, wherein adjusting the percentage of carrier removed is accomplished by a user.

28. (original) The method according to Claim 26, wherein adjusting the percentage of carrier removed is accomplished by a controller.

29. (previously presented) A method of treating a recording element comprising:

removing a predetermined percentage of a carrier present in the recording element in a first station;

increasing a durability characteristic of the recording element in a second station, wherein the second station is distinct from the first station; and

adjusting the percentage of the carrier removed based on a characteristic of the recording element.

30. (original) The method according to Claim 20, wherein removing the predetermined percentage of carrier includes applying air flow to the recording element.

31. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the carrier removal station includes an exhaust fan for removing the carrier.

32. (original) The apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein the carrier removal station includes a cooling air flow on the media to prevent cracking and deformation of the media by the heating element.